

**ELEMENT 611: TRANSPORTATION 2025**  
***LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN: 2004 UPDATE***

## **01 INTRODUCTION**

The State Planning Council adopted this plan update as Element 611 of the State Guide Plan on August 12, 2004. It replaces the previous Ground Transportation Plan adopted in 2001. This plan is generally updated every three years and serves several purposes:

- It sets state policy, to guide public and private decisions involving transportation.
- As a State Guide Plan element, it is a basis for determining consistency of local comprehensive plans and other plans, programs, and projects with state policies.
- It provides a long-range framework for advancing projects in two-year Transportation Improvement Programs.
- It includes the State's Congestion Management Plan (required for ozone non-attainment areas).
- It is a requirement for federal transportation funding.

Consolidation of two other State Guide Plan Elements became part of the planning process. The adoption of this plan contains necessary language to maintain current and desirable policies and strategies contained in Element 691 – Transportation Element of the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality (1982) and Element 620 – Transportation System Management Plan (1977). This was done to streamline project and plan reviews and eliminate documents that are no longer current. The Plan update includes the State's Congestion Management Plan (required for ozone non-attainment areas).

The following State Guide Plan elements also address transportation topics:

Element 155: Greenspace and Greenways  
Element 640: State Airport System Plan  
Element 651: Waterborne Passenger Transportation Plan  
Element 661: Freight Rail Plan

## **02 ISSUES ADDRESSED**

This major update of the plan completed in 2004 includes new elements such as the Congestion Management Plan and a discussion of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness as they relate to the transportation system.

As directed in the 2001 Plan, performance measures have also been established in the areas of safety, environmental stewardship, and mobility. These measures will be used

to monitor progress towards objectives and may be used in the state budgetary process. They were developed with input from transportation system stakeholders, including the public.

This update was based upon the following inputs:

- A Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of representatives of state agencies, local governments, regional organizations, transportation system providers and users, private organizations, and citizens having an interest or expertise in transportation matters. This group meets monthly, is directly involved in preparing the long range transportation plan and transportation project programming documents, and advises the State Planning Council on transportation-related matters.
- Six focus groups (listed below) comprised of TAC members, invited agencies, private sector representatives, and public members. These groups met a total of 18 times and allowed for public discussion of the goals, policies, and recommendations of the current plan, as well as defining new issues.
  - Congestion and ITS
  - Environment and Land Use
  - Freight and Northeast Corridor
  - Homeland Security
  - Safety
  - Transit and Urban Transportation
- An intensive travel corridor visioning process conducted by the Statewide Planning Program in 2003 that allowed for regional discussions of land use and transportation issues around seven major travel corridors. Six meetings with local planning officials, and seven public workshops were held.
- A series of eight Walkable Community Workshops, which assembled nearly 200 state and local officials, and interested citizens to consider expert advice, share information and devise steps needed to make Rhode Island communities more “walkable”.
- Results from the 2000 Census, and Census Transportation Planning Package.
- Updated congestion projections through the statewide travel demand model based on updated population and employment projections.
- Data, studies and analyses of system operations and needs compiled by state transportation operating agencies.
- A survey administered by mail and website to determine travel behavior and public opinion on transportation issues.

- Coordination with the update of the State Land Use Plan, simultaneously being undertaken by Statewide Planning.
- An assessment of the conformity of the plan's recommendations with the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality (SIP).

These inputs were used by the Transportation Advisory Committee and staff to prepare a draft update to the plan that was recommended to the State Planning Council on June 10, 2004. Following review by the Council, and public hearings held on July 22, 2004, the draft plan was approved by the Council on August 12, 2004.

As with most planning efforts, the best information available was used. At the time of plan adoption, the reauthorization of major federal transportation programs had not yet occurred, and the programs were being kept alive through short-term extensions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) which expired on September 30, 2003. The lack of a 6-year funding bill has added an increased level of uncertainty to the financial planning portion of this document.

To demonstrate fiscal constraint (as required by the federal funding agencies), level funding was generally assumed throughout the planning period in highway and transit programs. The plan discusses funding shortages in coming years based on normal projected inflationary increases in operating costs without corresponding increases in the state gas tax. The state continues to issue bonds for \$60 million every two years to match federal dollars, a practice that is not sustainable and that this plan recommends be discontinued in favor of a "pay-as-you-go" system. To achieve this would require a new source of funds to cover RIDOT's debt service. Additionally, the current level of transit service provided by RIPTA cannot be sustained without increased funding. It is widely accepted that the transportation needs in Rhode Island far outweigh the resources that are expected to be available from current resources.

### **03 GOALS and POLICIES**

The plan is organized around fourteen broad goals, all under the umbrella of a vision statement. A vision is a futuristic framework, a model that we can agree on and strive towards. It is at once a context for planning, the basis for program design, and reflective of the wishes of the state's citizens.

#### **Vision Statement**

Our common vision recognizes transportation as a core function that threads through other elements of society. Transportation connects the state with the global and regional economies, the home with the workplace, the individual with the community, and all of us with one another. It must equitably benefit all communities, and must be reconciled with quality of life issues as vital as the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the preservation of our natural and historic heritage and beauty of the natural and built environments. It cannot exist independently of these concerns.

**B. BICYCLE:** Maintain and expand an integrated statewide network of on-road and off-road bicycle routes to provide a safe means of travel for commuting, recreation, and tourism in order to improve public health, and reduce auto congestion and dependency.

Policies:

B.2.a. Maintain existing bicycle paths and on-street lanes in a clean, safe, and attractive condition.

B.2.b. Expand the on and off-road bicycle network – prioritizing projects that provide links between bike paths, seamless connections to other modes, or have the potential to reduce automobile traffic. This includes provision of facilities such as bike racks, lockers, showers, etc.

B.2.c. Encourage cities and towns to address bicycle transportation in comprehensive plans. Promote locally sponsored bicycle facilities, which connect with and complement the state system.

B.2.d. Adhere to the "bicycle tolerant" design philosophy in all highway reconstructions. Include experienced bicyclists in the design review process for both on and off road bicycle routes.

B.2.e. Promote bicycling as a viable transportation choice for commuters, students, and tourists. Businesses receiving state funding for expansion should accommodate bicycle commuting by providing user facilities if safe and reasonable connections can be made to an existing bicycle route.

B.2.f. Accommodate pedestrians, skateboards, non-motorized scooters, roller blades/skates, strollers, motorized and non-motorized wheelchairs on off-road paths.

B.2.g. Cooperate with public and private sector entities to promote and provide a resource for healthy recreation activities.

**D. DESIGN:** Strive for excellence in design of transportation projects to enhance safety, security, mobility, and environmental stewardship, aesthetic quality, and community livability.

Policies:

D.2.a. Utilize context sensitive design solutions for roads and streets that respond to the environs in which they are located, while adhering to appropriate requirements for safety and capacity. These must be flexible to adapt to different situations and must consider bicycle and pedestrian accommodations where feasible.

D.2.b. Emphasize effective and attractive signage that clearly conveys essential safety and directional information to travelers. Where appropriate, employ gateway signage to distinguish regions and themes and to provide increased identification for transportation facilities, business and civic centers, historic districts, institutions, tourist destinations, and natural features like rivers and watersheds.

D.2.c. Enhance community livability and create inviting public spaces through traffic calming, pedestrian amenities, view corridors, and attractive landscaping, where appropriate.

D.2.d. Manage vegetation in transportation rights-of-way for multiple objectives: safety, air and water quality, noise reduction, community aesthetics, and natural habitat values.

D.2.e. Encourage communities to identify design objectives (including landscaping and aesthetic goals) for arterials, gateways, major intersections, and collector streets in local

comprehensive plans, especially for designated scenic routes and connection to appropriate business areas.

D.2.f. Consider environmental enhancements, noise reduction, and energy efficiency in facility design and construction.

**ED. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Support a vigorous economy by facilitating the multi-modal movement of freight and passengers within Rhode Island and the northeast region.

Policies:

ED.2.A. Proactively work with state agencies and other stakeholders to determine needs of employers, employees, un- and under-employed individuals, and students, and strive for transportation options that support full employment and educational opportunities.

ED.2.B. Provide viable and affordable transportation options.

ED.2.c Support regional examination and planning of interstate transportation-related economic development issues.

ED.2.d. Ensure that freight rail continues to serve the region. Join with other New England states in participating in decision-making on changes in regional rail service, such as changes in ownership, rate structure, maintenance of the network, and accommodating intercity passenger rail service.

ED.2.e. Encourage provision of full transportation services and facilities at Quonset Davisville Port and Commerce Park including freight rail, highway, port, airport, transit, and commuter alternatives.

ED.2.f. Use transportation to support economic development that takes place in existing built-up areas or on prime sites suitable for intensive development. Transportation investments should support both intra and interstate regional economic development opportunities. Examples are development of prime industrial sites in Cranston and East Providence; Warwick's proposed mixed-use centers near the airport; and the Blackstone Valley in a way that preserves its historic and natural character.

ED.2g. Use transportation investments to support community economic development including village centers, "Main Streets", central business districts, and brown fields.

ED.2.h. Utilize transportation investments to support tourism, one of the state's most important industries. Strengthen linkages between the Providence metropolitan center, air and rail terminals, and tourist attractions in Newport, South County, and the Blackstone Valley.

ED.2.i. Recognize Narragansett Bay as a critical waterway and transportation asset for fuel transport and other freight.

**ER. EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** Develop a transportation system that serves Rhode Islanders and the region in the event of natural disasters, accidents, and acts of terrorism in a manner that minimizes injury, loss of life, and disruption to the economy; facilitates evacuation of people; and allows emergency response and recovery activities to occur.

Policies:

ER.2.a. Projects that serve a dual purpose (such as congestion relief and emergency response) should be given greater consideration than single purpose projects.

ER.2.b. Invest transportation resources in infrastructure such as communications facilities that benefit the transportation system.

ER.2.c. Continue to improve and enhance interstate communication and cooperation through the I-95 Corridor Coalition.

ER.2.d. Employ prevention and mitigation strategies in design of new projects.

ER.2.e. Coordinate with US Coast Guard and others in assessing safety risks of transporting potentially hazardous cargo on Narragansett Bay and throughout the state on other modes.

**EN. ENVIRONMENT:** Recognize, protect and enhance the quality of the state's environment and the livability of its communities through well-designed transportation projects and effective operation of the transportation system.

Policies:

EN.2.a. Reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases from mobile sources, and conserve energy by reducing vehicles miles traveled; reducing the number of single occupant vehicle trips; promoting increased usage of high efficiency vehicle technologies; and retaining vegetated buffers.

EN.2.b. Manage storm water runoff from roadways and reduce pollutants through retrofit and maintenance of storm drains, implementation of best management practices, retention of trees within rights-of-way to provide vegetated buffers for infiltration, limiting the use of deicing chemicals (consistent with safety), and other approaches, especially within the watersheds of impaired waters and over groundwater aquifers.

EN.2.c. Utilize transportation programs and projects to maintain and enhance environmental quality and community livability, by including features such as historic preservation, landscaping, and streetscape to improve aesthetics, and contribute to water and air quality improvements.

ED.2.d. Ensure that the transportation planning and project programming embrace the principles of environmental stewardship through measures to mitigate cumulative environmental impacts on affected communities. Utilize existing environmental data to estimate the additional burdens or benefits projects will have on air and water quality.

**EQ. EQUITY:** Ensure that the transportation system equitably serves all Rhode Islanders regardless of race, ethnic origin, income, age, mobility impairment, or geographic location.

Policies:

EQ.2.a. Proactively work with state agencies and other stakeholders to determine needs of underrepresented population, and strive for transportation options that encourage independency.

EQ.2.b. Ensure that transportation projects do not place disproportionate adverse environmental or other impacts on any community or population group.

EQ.2.c. Avoid displacement or loss of transportation services to populations of concern. Work to improve transit and other transportation services which directly benefit low income, minority, elderly, and disabled populations.

**F. FINANCE:** Provide a sustainable financial base for the transportation system that is adequate for supporting needed infrastructure and services with an emphasis on preservation and management of the existing system.

Policies:

F.2.a. Continue to develop additional financing sources and mechanisms for major projects, including joint development opportunities.

F.2.b. Allocate existing user fees to transportation uses and explore new user fees.

F.2.c. Phase out the use of general obligation bonds to match federal funds. Repayment of bond debt is a burden on transportation resources. Projects and programs should be funded on a pay-as-you-go basis except for large projects with a long useful life.

F.2.d. Support RIPTA with a long term dedicated and sustainable funded program to maintain and improve bus, trolley, and ferry service.

F.2.e. Clarify and publicize the priorities for transportation investments and procedures for allocation of funds.

F.2.f. Ensure that commitments to existing (approved) projects are met before initiating major new projects, which require substantial new funding commitments (except under extraordinary circumstances).

F.2.g. Provide RIDOT and RIPTA with the necessary resources to track revenues, expenditures, cost increases, contracts, etc. and report periodically to the Transportation Advisory Committee.

**H. HIGHWAY:** Maintain the highway and bridge network in a safe, attractive, and less congested condition to carry passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, government vehicles, and transit vehicles, as well as bicycles and pedestrians. Recognize roadways as vital public spaces that accommodate travel, commerce, community activities, and utility infrastructure.

Policies:

H.2.a. Give priority to preserving and managing the transportation system. Follow regularly scheduled programs of pavement and bridge management to prevent highway structures from premature deterioration, resulting in safety hazards and the need for more frequent and costly full rehabilitation or replacement.

H.2.b. Address deficiencies in the transportation system (safety, condition, capacity, sidewalks, etc.).

H.2.c. Minimize recurring and non-recurring congestion through increased use of other travel modes, effective incident management and access management, and traffic flow improvements.

H.2.d. Encourage alternatives to single-occupant auto travel, such as transit, carpools, vanpools, and bicycle and pedestrian travel to help reduce vehicle-miles of travel, conserve energy, improve air quality, benefit the environment in other ways, and support the economy.

H.2.e. Consider expansion of capacity on key regional transportation facilities where it is shown to be cost-effective and justified by long term system benefits, and following evaluation of alternate modes and community impacts.

H.2.f. Continue support of RIDOT's Incident Management Program and Transportation Management Center (TMC). Aggressively implement Intelligent Transportation Systems

to all limited access highways and appropriate state routes. Encourage private sector participation in deployment of hardware. Evaluate the effectiveness of the TMC before any major expansion is approved.

**I. INTERMODAL:** Provide convenient intermodal facilities and services offering seamless connections for passengers and freight.

Policies:

I.2.a. Provide convenient and attractive intermodal connections for passengers between all modes, especially to encourage greater use of public transit and non-motorized transportation.

I.2.b. Provide ample infrastructure for intermodal movement of freight to grow business and sustain residences at reasonable costs.

I.2.c. Work with the private sector to improve intermodal connections.

I.2.d. Improve coordination with the private sector in freight planning.

**LC. LAND USE:** Continue to integrate land use and transportation planning using a travel corridor framework and promote responsible development practices in the public and private sectors.

Policies:

LC.2.a. Achieve more concentrated development patterns, emphasizing growth in existing urban places -- older cities and their downtowns, historic town centers, and other built-up areas. Promote higher housing densities and greater mix of land uses, within the limits of basic compatibility. Support and stimulate this development pattern with multi-modal transportation investments and other essential services.

LC.2.b. Support the preservation of open space within transportation corridors to maintain the character of rural areas of the state, to protect critical resources, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance and reinvigorate urbanized areas.

LC.2.c. Organize transportation planning in Rhode Island around a travel corridor framework. Encourage the state and cities and towns to work together to control land development along arterial highways so as to preserve their function, capacity, safety, and appearance. Coordinate land use and congestion management planning and strengthen the state's role in access management and corridor preservation through corridor plans developed in close cooperation with cities and towns.

LC.2.d. Promote protection of property and rights of way to secure the long-term transportation needs of the state.

**PE. PEDESTRIAN:** Create and maintain safe and attractive walkable communities to encourage more walking trips, enhance transit usage, improve public health, and reduce auto congestion and dependency.

Policies:

PE.2.a. Elevate pedestrian transportation to a priority level.

Every trip involves walking, making it the most pervasive form of transportation.

According equal status to pedestrian transportation will require a fundamental change in the way state and local agencies do business. This will not be a quick change, but rather, an evolutionary process.

PE.2.b. Ensure that all pedestrian facilities accommodate the needs of the physically challenged.

PE.2.c. Recognize pedestrian planning considerations as a priority to be fully integrated in all transportation and land use planning processes.

**PL. PLANNING:** Conduct a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing planning process that responds to public interests and concerns, strives to meet the needs of underserved communities, and fosters productive relationships with elected and appointed officials from all levels of government and the private sector.

Policies:

PL.2.a. Participate as necessary at the federal level in policy development and authorization legislation, and maintain good relationships with federal agency staff and Congressional delegation.

PL.2.b. Continue integrating a regional perspective into the planning process for all aspects of the state's development across both functional and jurisdictional lines. Obtain a high level of official commitment to, and a high degree of public participation in, this process. Maintain contact with counterparts at various regional levels (North Atlantic, Northeast, New England, I-95 Corridor), especially through professional associations.

PL.2.c. Support state planning efforts and maintain good working relationships with sister state agencies, quasi-public entities, higher education, and the General Assembly.

PL.2.d. Improve and expand corridor level planning to ensure connections to land use planning and congestion management as well as coordination among local jurisdictions, regional planning agencies, neighboring MPO's and transit authorities.

PL.2.e. Continue to work with cities, towns, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe, on their comprehensive plans; land development, subdivision, and zoning regulations; and design standards and guidelines to ensure consistency with and implementation of state policies and plans.

PL.2.f. Support inclusive transportation planning and resource allocation processes that are accessible to, understood by, and constructively engage all population groups and interests in defining and addressing transportation needs.

PL.2.g. Actively engage the private sector, interest groups, non-profits, and transportation providers in the planning process.

PL.2.h. Periodically monitor plans and transportation system performance to assess progress made and identify deficiencies.

**S. SAFETY:** Improve the safety of all transportation modes through education, enforcement, and engineering solutions.

Policies:

S.2.a. Support educational efforts directed toward all population groups regarding safe use of all modes of transportation.

S.2.b. Strengthen safety laws and programs and improve enforcement, including more stringent driver training, licensing, and re-licensing; seat belt and motorcycle helmet requirements; and drunk driving penalties.

S.2.c. Improve the operating characteristics of the transportation system through safety improvements to the right of way including pavement, signage, signalization, lighting, sight distances, sidewalks, traffic calming, etc.

S.2.d. Improve crash reporting system and data analysis.

**T. TRANSIT:** Provide a safe, robust, and convenient network of buses, trains, and ferries with seamless intermodal connections, and encourage carpools and vanpools to increase access to employment and commerce, provide a viable means of transportation, improve the environment, and reduce auto congestion and dependency. Policies:

T.2.a. Improve the present overall level of RIPTA Service. RIPTA is a public investment that is crucial to the economy, contributes to the fabric and strength of urban areas, provides a means of transportation for people who can not or choose not to drive (whether commuters, shoppers, low-income, elderly, students, disabled, or others), improves the environment, and conserves energy.

T.2.b. Continue existing commuter rail service to Providence through the Pilgrim Partnership. Extend Boston-Providence commuter rail service south in incremental steps to T.F. Green State Airport and Wickford Junction under a Phase I start-up service. Additional sites in Cranston, East Greenwich, Kingston, Pawtucket/Central Falls, Westerly, and West Davisville should be considered and evaluated based on demand, operations, infrastructure requirements, site availability, economic development opportunities, community support, and cost. Support extension of MBTA commuter service to Fall River. Study the use of the FRIP track for commuter rail use between Warwick and Providence, and possible use by Amtrak as a siding at Warwick Station.

T.2.c. Study growth impacts of new rail service and work with affected cities and towns to implement growth management measures in concert with extension of rail service. This includes areas of RI along the northeast corridor as well communities impacted by rail service outside the state (such as New London, CT; Fall River, MA; and Franklin, MA)

T.2.d. Improve and expand water transportation between Providence, Newport, and other Bay communities. Rocky Point, Quonset Davisville, Bristol, Warren, Melville, East Greenwich, and other communities may be considered as future expansion opportunities.

T.2.e. Adjust transit operations to the changing needs of a dynamic population -- the increasing proportion of elderly people, the large number of people with limited capability in English, the requirements that welfare recipients find work, the increasing number of disabled people seeking to travel, the number of students on evening schedules and the prospects for a twelve-month school year, and the dispersed location of many critical facilities and services. Consider routes, time of service, and other operational characteristics in selecting equipment. This is particularly important for low-income individuals, transitional housing or shelter residents, and the homeless.

T.2.f. Market transit services conscientiously and efficiently to all segments of the public as a convenient and reliable alternative to the automobile.

Make the transit system and intermodal connections user-friendly for all members of the riding public.

T.2.g. Develop state policy on using the least-cost, most efficient mode of travel for state-funded programs (e.g., transit over paratransit with rates structured to give priority to transit usage, and service to the nearest service outlet). Provide that all agencies purchasing paratransit services contract with RIde and that social service agencies be located along transit routes. Coordinate all state and municipal-funded transportation services, and consolidate operations where feasible. This includes fixed route, paratransit, school districts, Head Start, temporary employment agencies, and human service agencies outside of the RIde system. There should be no fare-free service unless supported by a third-party payee.

#### 04 RECOMMENDATIONS

The full plan contains 41 pages of Objectives, Policies, Strategies and Performance Measures organized under the fourteen Goals. The document can be found at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/transportation/recommend.pdf>.